LEO STRAUSS: EXOTERIC TEACHING (1939)

Edited

> *Le partage du brave homme est d'expliquer librement ses pensées. Celui qui n'ose regarder fixément les deux pôles de la vie humaine, la religion et le gouvernement, n'est qu'un lâche.*
>
> —Voltaire.[1]

The distinction between exoteric (or public[2]) and esoteric (or secret) teaching is not at present considered to be of any significance for the understanding of the thought of the past: the leading encyclopedia of classical antiquity does not contain any article, however brief, on *exoteric* or *esoteric*. Since a considerable number of ancient writers had[3] not a little to say about the distinction in question, the silence of the leading encyclopedia cannot possibly be due to the silence of the sources; it must be due to the influence of modern philosophy on classical scholarship; it is that influence which prevents scholars from attaching significance to numerous[4], if not necessarily correct, statements of ancient writers. For while it is for classical scholars to decide whether and where[5] the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching occurs in the sources, it is for philosophers to decide whether that distinction is significant in itself. And modern philosophy is not favorable to an affirmative answer to this philosophic question. The classical scholar Zeller may have believed to have cogent reasons for rejecting the view that Aristotle "designedly chose for (his scientific publications) a style obscure and unintelligible to the lay mind"; but it must be doubted whether these reasons would have appeared to

[1] "It is the lot of the brave [or decent] man to explain his thoughts freely. He who does not dare to look directly at the two poles of human life, religion and government, is only a coward." Quoted with some alterations from Voltaire, *L'A, B, C, ou Dialogues entre A, B et C* (dixième entretien, sur la religion), in *Dialogues et Anecdotes Philosophiques*, edited by Raymond Naves (Paris: Garnier, 1939), 304.

[2] M: popular → public

[3] M: has

[4] M: important → numerous

[5] TS/CC: when → where

him equally cogent, if he had not been assured by the philosopher Zeller that the rejected view "attributes to the philosopher a very childish sort of mystification, wholly destitute of any reasonable motive."[I]

As late as the last third of the 18th century, the view that all the ancient philosophers had distinguished between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching was still maintained, and its essential implications were fully understood at least by one man. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing united in himself in a unique way the so divergent qualities of the philosopher and of the scholar. He discussed the question of exotericism clearly and fully in three [6]little[6] writings of his: in "Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen" (1773), in "Des Andreas Wissowatius' Einwürfe wider die Dreieinigkeit" (1773) and in "Ernst und Falk" (1777 and 1780).[II] He discussed it as clearly and as fully as could be done by someone who still accepted exotericism not merely as a strange fact of the past, but rather as an intelligible necessity for all times and, therefore, as a principle guiding his own literary activity.[III] In short, Lessing was the last writer who revealed, while hiding them, the reasons compelling wise men to hide the truth: he wrote between the lines about the art of writing between the lines.

In "Ernst und Falk," a character called[7] Falk, who expresses himself somewhat evasively and sometimes even enigmatically, tries to show that every political constitution, and even the best political constitution[8], is necessarily imperfect: the necessary imperfection of all political life makes necessary the existence of what he calls free-masonry, and he does not hesitate to assert that free-masonry, which is necessary, was always in existence and will always be. Falk himself is a free-mason, if a heretical[9] free-mason, and in order to be a free-mason, a man must know truths which ought better to be concealed.[IV] What[10] is then the concealed reason of his view that all political life is necessarily[11] imperfect?[V] The intention of the good

[I] *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics* (translated by Costelloe and Muirhead), London 1897, I 120f.

[6] Added by LS in M between the lines or in the margins.

[II] See Lessing, *Werke*, eds. Petersen and von Olshausen, VI 21–60 ("Ernst und Falk") and XXI 138–189 (the two other treatises mentioned above). Compare also Lessing's "Über eine zeitige Aufgabe" (XXIV 146–153).

[III] Lessing's exotericism was recognized to a certain extent by Gottfried Fittbogen, *Die Religion Lessings*, Leipzig 1923, 60ff. and 79ff. Fittbogen does not however see the most important implications of his valuable remarks, since his interpretation of Lessing is based on a Kantian or post-Kantian view of the meaning of philosophy.

[7] TS: character, called → character called [correction not in CC]

[8] M: and even the absolutely best political constitution [This part of the sentence was not transcribed by the typist. LS reinserted it in TS and CC. However, he dropped the word "absolutely."]

[9] M: heretic → heretical

[IV] "*Falk*. Weißt du, Freund, daß du schon ein halber Freimäurer bist? …denn du erkennst ja schon Wahrheiten, die man besser verschweigt. *Ernst*. Aber sagen *könnte*. *Falk*. Der Weise *kann* nicht sagen, was er besser verschweigt." Second Dialogue, *loc. cit.*, p. 31. ["*Falk*: Do you know, friend, that you are already half a free-mason? …because you already realize truths which are better to be concealed. *Ernst*: But which *could* be said. *Falk*: The wise man *cannot* say what he would do better to conceal."]

[10] TS: Which → What [correction not in CC]

[11] M: necessarily is

[V] In the 3rd dialogue (p. 40), it is explicitly stated that only such shortcomings of even the best political constitution have been explicitly mentioned as are evident even to the most shortsighted eye. This implies that there are other shortcomings of political life as such which are not evident to "shortsighted eyes."

works of the free-masons is to make good works superfluous,[VI] and free-masonry came into being[VII] when[12] someone who originally had planned a scientific society which should make the speculative truths useful for practical and political life conceived[13] of a "society which should raise itself from the practice of civil life to speculation."[VIII] The concealed reasons[14] of the imperfection of political life as such are the facts[15] that all practical or political life is essentially inferior to contemplative life, or that all works, and therefore also all good works, are "superfluous" as far as the level of theoretical life, which is self-sufficient, is reached, and that the requirements of the lower are bound from time to time to conflict with, and to supersede in practice, the requirements of the higher. Consideration of that conflict is the ultimate reason why the "free-masons" (i.e. the wise or the men of contemplation[16]) must conceal certain fundamental truths. It may be added that Lessing points out in "Ernst und Falk" that the variety of religions is due to the variety of political constitutions[IX]: the religious problem (i.e. the problem of historical, positive religion) is considered by him as part and parcel of the political problem.[17]

In "Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen" and in "Wissowatius," Lessing applies these views to an explanation of Leibniz' attitude toward religion. The explicit purpose of these two little treatises is to discuss "the motives and reasons" which had induced Leibniz to defend certain orthodox beliefs (the belief in eternal damnation and the belief in trinity).[X] While defending Leibniz' defense of the belief in eternal damnation, Lessing states that Leibniz' peculiar way of assenting to received opinions is *identical*[18] with "what all the ancient philosophers used to do in their exoteric speech."[XI] By making that statement, he not only asserts that all the ancient philosophers made use of two manners of teaching, of an exoteric manner and an esoteric manner; he also bids us[19] *trace back*[18] all essential features of Leibniz' exotericism to the exotericism of the ancients. What, then,

[VI] 1st dialogue (at the end) and 3rd dialogue (p. 39).

[VII] The contradiction between the statement made at the beginning that free-masonry is always in existence, and the statement made toward the end that free-masonry came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century enables us to see that free-masonry is an ambiguous term. [In M the sentence is concluded: "…18th century shall enable us to see that 'free-masonry' is an ambiguous term, and that the secret meaning of that term indicates what ought to be called in unmetaphoric language—philosophy." In TS/CC the conclusion reads differently ("…ambiguous term, and that the secret meaning of the term is 'philosophy.'") and was crossed out by LS.]

[12] TS: being, when → being when [correction not in CC]

[13] TS: life, conceived → life conceived [correction not in CC]

[VIII] 5th dialogue (toward the end).

[14] M: reason → reasons

[15] M: is the fact → are the facts

[16] M: speculation → contemplation

[IX] 2nd dialogue (p. 34f.).

[17] M: (i.e. the problem of positive religion) is a part of the political problem → (i.e. the problem of historical, positive religion) is considered by him as part and parcel of the political problem

[X] *Werke*, XXI 143 and 181.

[18] Italics added in TS (correction not in CC).

[XI] *Loc. cit.*, 147.

[19] TS: bids us to → bids us [correction not in CC]

[20] TS/CC: Which are, then, → What, then, are

are[20] the essential features of Leibniz' exotericism? Or, in other words, what[21] are the motives and reasons which guided Leibniz in his defense of the orthodox or received opinion?[XII] Lessing's first answer to this question is that Leibniz' peculiar way of assenting to received opinions is identical with "what all the ancient philosophers used to do in their exoteric speech. He observed a sort of prudence for which, it is true, our most recent philosophers have become much too wise."[XIII] The distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech has then so little to do with "mysticism" of any sort that it is an outcome of prudence. Somewhat later on Lessing indicates the difference between the esoteric reason enabling[22] Leibniz [6]to[6] defend[23] the orthodox doctrine of eternal damnation, and the exoteric reason expressed in[24] his defense[25] of that doctrine.[XIV] That exoteric reason, he asserts, is based on the mere possibility of eternally increasing wickedness of moral beings[26]. And then he goes on to say: "It is true, humanity shudders at this conception although it concerns the mere possibility. I should[27] not however for that reason raise the question: why frighten with a mere possibility? For I should[28] have to expect this counterquestion: why not frighten with it, since it can only be frightful to him who has never been earnest about the betterment of himself." This implies that a philosopher who makes an exoteric statement, asserts, not a fact, but what Lessing chooses to call "a mere possibility": he does not, strictly speaking, believe in the truth of that statement (e.g. of the statement that there is[29] such a thing as eternally increasing wickedness of human beings which would justify eternally increasing punishments). This is indicated by Lessing in the following remark introducing a quotation from the final part of Plato's *Gorgias*: "Socrates himself believed in such eternal punishments quite seriously, he believed in them at least to the extent[30] that he considered it expedient[31] to teach such punishments in terms which do not in any way arouse suspicion and which are most explicit."[XV]

Before proceeding any further, I must summarize Lessing's view of exoteric teaching. To avoid the danger of arbitrary interpretation, I shall omit all elements of that view which are not noticed[32] at a first glance even by the most superficial

[21] TS/CC: which → what

[XII] Cf. *loc. cit.*, 146.

[XIII] *Loc. cit.*, 147. Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 180c7–d5, with *Protagoras* 316c5–317c5 and 343b4–5.

[22] M: underlying → enabling

[23] M: defence of → defend

[24] M: underlying → expressed in

[25] M: explicit defence → defence

[XIV] *Loc. cit.*, 153f.

[26] M: a moral being → moral beings

[27] M: shall

[28] M: shall → should

[29] In M "is" is italicized.

[30] M: at least so far

[31] M: expedient (*zuträglich*)

[XV] *Loc. cit.*, 160. Cf. also the remarks about "believing" on pp. 184, 187, and 189. [In M this footnote begins: "Or: 'in terms which are least open to suspicion and most explicit' ('mit den unverdächtigsten und ausdrücklichsten Worten')."—For a different translation of the same passage, cf. *PAW* 183.]

[32] M: evident → noticed

reader of Lessing, although the obvious[33] part of his view, if taken by itself, is somewhat enigmatic. 1) Lessing asserts that all the ancient philosophers and Leibniz[XVI] made use of exoteric presentation of the truth, as distinguished from its esoteric presentation. 2) The exoteric presentation of the truth makes[34] use of statements which are considered by the philosopher himself statements, not of facts, but of mere possibilities. 3) Exoteric statements (i.e. such statements as would not [6]and could not[6] occur within the esoteric teaching) are made by the philosopher for reasons of prudence or expediency. 4) Some[35] exoteric statements are addressed to morally inferior people who ought to be frightened by such statements. 5) There are certain truths which must[36] be concealed. 6) Even the best political constitution is bound to be imperfect. 7) Theoretical life is superior to practical or political life. The impression created by this summary, that there is a close connection between exotericism and a peculiar attitude toward political and practical life, is not misleading: "free-masonry," which [6]as such[6] knows of secret truths, owes its existence to the necessary imperfection of all practical or political life.

Some readers might be inclined to dismiss Lessing's whole teaching at once, since it seems to be based on the obviously erroneous, or[37] merely traditional,[XVII] assumption that *all* the ancient philosophers have[38] made use of exoteric speeches. To warn such readers, one must point out that the incriminated sentence permits of a wholly unobjectionable interpretation: Lessing implicitly denies that writers on philosophical[39] topics who reject exotericism, deserve the name of philosophers.[XVIII] For he knew the passages in Plato in which it is indicated[40] that it was[41] the sophists who refused to conceal the truth.

After Lessing, who died in the year in which Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason*, the question of exotericism seems to have[42] been lost sight of almost completely, at least among scholars and philosophers as distinguished from novelists. When Schleiermacher introduced that style of Platonic studies, in which classical scholarship is still engaged, and which is based on the identification of the natural order of Platonic dialogues with the sequence of their elaboration, he still had to discuss in detail the view that there are two kinds of Platonic teaching, an exoteric

[33] M: evident or obvious → obvious

[XVI] In a private conversation, published only after his death, Lessing said to F. H. Jacobi about Leibniz: "Es ist bei dem größten Scharfsinn oft sehr schwer, seine eigentliche Meinung zu entdecken." *Werke*, XXIV 173. ["With the greatest ingenuity it is often very difficult to discover his real opinion."]

[34] M: may make → makes

[35] M: At least some → Some

[36] M: ought better → must

[37] M: and → or

[XVII] Compare Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, V [ch. IX] 58 (365 Stählin).

[38] M: had → have

[39] M: philosophic

[XVIII] Cf. for a similar example of Lessing's way of expressing himself his *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts* VII (*Werke*, XVII 97ff.).

[40] M: made clear → indicated

[41] M: were

[42] M: has → seems to have

kind and an esoteric one. In doing this, he makes five or six extremely[43] important and true remarks about Plato's literary devices,[XIX] remarks the subtlety of which has, to my knowledge, never been surpassed or even rivaled since. Yet he failed to see the crucial question. He asserts that there is only one Platonic *teaching*[18]—the teaching presented in the dialogues—although there is, so to speak, an infinite number of levels[44] of the understanding of that teaching[45]: it is the same teaching which the beginner understands inadequately, and which only the perfectly trained student of Plato understands adequately[46]. But is then the teaching which the beginner actually understands[47] identical with the *teaching*[18] which the perfectly trained student actually understands? The distinction between Plato's exoteric and esoteric teaching had sometimes been[48] traced back to Plato's opposition to "polytheism and popular religion" and to the necessity [6]in which he found himself[6] of hiding that opposition; Schleiermacher believes he has[49] refuted this view by asserting that "Plato's principles on that topic are clear enough to read in his writings, so that one can scarcely believe that his pupils might have needed still more information about them."[XX] Yet, "polytheism and popular religion" is an ambiguous expression:[50] if Schleiermacher had used the less ambiguous expression[51] "belief in the existence of the gods worshipped by the city of Athens," he could not have said that Plato's opposition to that belief is clearly expressed in his writings.[52] As a matter of fact, in his introduction to his translation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, he considers it a weak point of that writing that Plato has not made more energetic use of the argument taken from Socrates's service to Apollo, for refuting the charge that Socrates did not believe in "the[53] old gods."[XXI] If Plato's Socrates believed[54] in "the old gods," is not Plato himself likely to have believed in them as well? And how can one then say that Plato's opposition to "polytheism and popular religion"

[43] M: very → extremely

[XIX] F. Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, I 1, Berlin 1804, 20 (3. Auflage, Berlin 1855, 16). [The references to the third edition in footnotes XIX, XX, and XXI were added by LS between the lines in CC, but not in TS. In footnote XXII, LS made no reference to the third edition.]

[44] M: degrees [In TS and CC, LS inserted "degrees" between the lines without crossing out "levels."]

[45] TS/CC: understanding that teaching → the understanding of that teaching

[46] M: perfectly → adequately

[47] TS: understands, → understands [correction not in CC]

[48] M: be

[49] M: to have

[XX] *Loc. cit.*, 14 (3rd ed. Berlin 1855, 12).

[50] In M, one and a half sentences which originally preceded this sentence were crossed out: "But he forgets the fact that Plato has not written his dialogues for his pupils only, but rather as a possession for all times, or that not all readers of Plato are pupils of Plato. Yet this refutation is based on."

[51] Omitted in TS, but later inserted by LS. (Correction not in CC.)

[52] In M a sentence originally following this sentence was crossed out: "And is not that belief some sort of 'polytheism and popular religion'?"

[53] In TS and CC, but not in M, the opening quotation marks were placed in front of "a weak point ..." because the typist wrongly took the opening quotation marks in the sentence that was crossed out (cf. n52) to indicate the beginning of the quotation in this sentence.

[XXI] *Platons Werke*, I 2, Berlin 1805, 185 (3. Aufl., Berlin 1855, 128).

[54] TS/CC: has believed → believed

as such is clearly expressed in his writings? Schleiermacher's strongest argument against the distinction of two teachings of Plato appears to be his assertion that Plato's [6]real[6] investigations are hidden, not absolutely, but only from the inattentive readers, or that attention[55] is the only prerequisite for a full understanding of his real investigations as distinguished from those investigations which are merely the "skin" of the former.[XXII] But did any man in his senses ever assert that Plato wished to hide his secret teaching from all readers or from all men? Did any man whose judgment can claim to carry any weight in this matter ever understand by Plato's esoteric[56] teaching anything other than that teaching of his dialogues which escapes the inattentive readers only? The only possible difference of opinion concerns exclusively the meaning of the distinction between inattentive and attentive readers: does a continuous way[57] lead from the extremely inattentive reader to the extremely attentive reader, or is the way between the two extremes interrupted by a chasm? Schleiermacher tacitly assumes that the way from the beginning to the end is continuous, whereas, according to Plato, philosophy presupposes a real conversion[58],[XXIII] *i.e.*[18] a total break with the attitude of the beginner: the beginner is a man who has not yet for one moment left the cave, and who has even never[59] turned his eyes away from the shadows of man-made things[60] toward the exit of the cave, whereas the philosopher is the man who has left the cave and who (if he is not compelled to do otherwise) lives[61] outside of the cave, on "the island of the blessed."[62] The difference between the beginner and the philosopher (for the perfectly trained student of Plato is no one else but the genuine philosopher) is a difference not of degree, but of kind. Now, it is well-known that, according to Plato, virtue is knowledge or science; therefore, the beginner is inferior to the perfectly trained student of Plato not only intellectually, but also morally. That is to say, the

[55] M: the attention → attention

[XXII] "Das geheime …(ist) nur beziehungsweise so…" I 1, 12.—"…die eigentliche Untersuchung wird mit einer anderen, nicht wie mit einem Schleier, sondern wie mit einer angewachsenen Haut überkleidet, welche dem Unaufmerksamen, *aber auch nur diesem*, dasjenige verdeckt, was eigentlich soll beobachtet oder gefunden werden, dem Aufmerksamen aber nur noch den Sinn für den inneren Zusammenhang schärft und läutert." *Loc. cit.*, 20. (The italics are mine.) ["The secretive…(is) only relatively so…"; "…the actual investigation is covered with another, not as if with a veil but as if with a grown-on skin, which conceals from the inattentive [reader] but only from him that which actually ought to be observed or found, but which for the attentive [reader] sharpens and chastens the sense for the internal coherence."]

[56] M: secret or esoteric → esoteric

[57] In TS, "path" was written (not by LS) between the lines, and a question mark in the margin.

[58] M: "conversion" → conversion

[XXIII] *Republic* 518c–e and 521e [recte: 521c]. Cf. also *Phaedo* 69a–c. [In TS and CC, LS added "and 619c–d" to the references to the *Republic*. However, in M he inserted the reference in footnote XXIV. Cf. FP 361n11 and *CM* 27n34.]

[59] M: not even → even never

[60] In M, Strauss added "of men and man-made things" in the margin. The typist dropped "men and."

[61] M: and prefers the life → and who lives → and who (if he is not compelled to do otherwise) lives

[62] M: cave, the life on "the island of the blessed" to the life in the cave → cave, on "the island of the blessed"

morality[63] of the beginners has a basis essentially different from the basis on which the morality of the philosopher rests: their virtue is not[64] genuine virtue, but vulgar or political virtue only,[65] a virtue based not on insight[66], but on customs or laws.[XXIV] We may say, the morality of the beginners is the morality of the "auxiliaries" of the *Republic*, but not yet the morality of the "guardians." Now, the "auxiliaries,"[67] the best among whom are the beginners, must believe[68] "noble lies,"[XXV] *i.e.*[69] statements which, while being useful for the political community, are nevertheless lies. And there is a difference not of degree but of kind[70] between truth and lie or untruth. And what holds true of the difference between truth and lies[71] holds equally true of the difference between esoteric and exoteric teaching; for Plato's exoteric teaching is identical with his "noble lies." This connection of considerations, which is more or less familiar to every reader of Plato, if not duly emphasized by all students of Plato, is not even mentioned[72] by Schleiermacher in his refutation of the [6]view that there is a[6] distinction between Plato's exoteric and esoteric teaching. Nor does he,[73] in that context, [6]as much as allude[6] to Lessing's dialogues ("Ernst und Falk" and Lessing's conversation with F. H. Jacobi) which probably come closer[74] to the spirit[75] of the Platonic dialogues and their technique than any other modern work in the German language[76]. Therefore Schleiermacher's refutation[77] of the view in question is not convincing. A comparison of his *Philosophic Ethics* with the *Nicomachean Ethics* would bring to light the reason[XXVI] why he failed to pay any attention to the difference between the morality of the beginner and the morality of the philosopher, *i.e.*[18] to the difference which is at the bottom of the difference between exoteric and esoteric teaching.

I return to Lessing. How was Lessing led to notice,[XXVII] and to understand, the information about the fact [6]that[6] "all the ancient philosophers" had distinguished

[63] M: basis of morality → morality

[64] M: is not, and cannot be, → is not

[65] Originally, footnote XXIV was placed after "only." LS made the correction in M in pencil.

[66] M: philosophy → insight

[XXIV] *Republic* 430c3–5, 619c–d and *Phaedo* 82a10–b8. [LS inserted in M, but not in TS/CC, "*Rep.* 619c–d." Cf. the comment to footnote XXIII.]

[67] M: "auxiliaries"

[68] TS/CC: believe in → believe

[XXV] *Republic* 414b4ff. Cf. *Laws* 663d6ff.

[69] TS/CC: i.e. in → *i.e.* [italics added in TS, correction not in CC]

[70] TS/CC: is no difference of degree, but of kind, → is a difference not of degree but of kind

[71] M: lie,

[72] M: as much as alluded to → even mentioned

[73] M: he pay any attention, → he,

[74] TS/CC: come probably nearer → probably come closer

[75] M: spirit of the technique → spirit

[76] TS/CC: in the German language does → in the German language [The five words were added between the lines in M.]

[77] M: refutation is not convincing → refutation

[XXVI] That reason can be discovered by an analysis of the following statements, *e.g.*: "Knowledge of the essence of reason is ethics" (*Philosophische Sittenlehre*, § 60) and "The ordinary distinction between offensive and defensive wars is quite empty." (*Loc. cit.*, § 276).

[XXVII] Cf. the remarks of the young Lessing on the relevant passage in Gellius (XX 5) in the tenth *Literaturbrief* (*Werke*, IV 38).

between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching? If I am not mistaken, he rediscovered the bearing of that distinction by his own exertion after having[78] undergone his conversion[79], *i.e.*[18] after having had[80] the experience of what philosophy is and what[81] sacrifices it requires. For it is that experience which leads in a straight way to the distinction between the two groups of men, the philosophic men and the unphilosophic men, and therewith to the distinction between the two ways of presenting the truth. In a famous letter to a friend,[XXVIII] he expresses his fear that "by throwing away certain prejudices, I have thrown away a little too much that I shall have to fetch back[82]."[XXIX] That passage has sometimes been understood to indicate that Lessing was about to return from the intransigent rationalism of his earlier period toward a more positive view of the Bible and the Biblical tradition. There is ample evidence to show that this interpretation is wrong.[XXX] The context of the passage makes it clear that the things which Lessing had "thrown away" before and which, he feels, he ought to "fetch back" were truths which he descried "from afar" in a book by Ferguson, as he believed on the basis of what he had seen in the table of contents of that book. He also descried "from afar" in Ferguson's book "truths in the continual contradiction of which we happen to live[83] and we have to go on living continually in the interest of our quietude." There may very well be a connection between the two kinds of truth[84]: the truths which Lessing[85] had thrown away formerly[86] may have been truths contradictory to the truths[87] generally accepted by the philosophy of enlightenment[88] and also accepted by

[78] CC: having had

[79] M: "conversion" → conversion

[80] TS: i.e. after having made → *i.e.* after having had [correction not in CC]

[81] TS/CC: which → what

[XXVIII] To Moses Mendelssohn, of January 9, 1771.

[82] LS inserted between the lines in M, without crossing out "to fetch back," the alternative translation "get back again" (which was adopted by TS/CC). In the margin of the manuscript he put an exclamation mark. My decision to retain the first translation is supported by LS's use of this translation a few lines later.

[XXIX] Another statement about the crisis which Lessing underwent when he was about forty, occurs in the *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts*, LIV (*Werke*, XVII 250).

[XXX] See e.g. von Olshausen in his introduction to *Werke*, XXIV 41ff.—Compare also Jacobi's letter to Hamann of December 30th, 1784: "Als (Lessings) Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts…von einigen für eine nicht unchristliche Schrift, beinahe für eine Palinodie angesehen wurde, stieg sein Ärger über die Albernheit des Volkes bis zum Ergrimmen." (F. H. Jacobi, *Werke*, I 398). ["When (Lessing's) *Education of the Human Race*…was considered by some as a not un-Christian writing, [but] almost as a palinode, his anger about the absurdity of the people grew to the point of fury."]

[83] brM: actually live → happen to live [In M, a few sentences of this paragraph ("The context of the passage…he ought to 'fetch back' are 'truth in the continual contradiction of which we have to live'; such truths he descried 'from afar' in a book by Ferguson as he believed on the basis of what he had seen in the table of content of that work.") were crossed out by LS. He inserted a red cross in crayon in the margin. The passage that is reproduced in TS and which differs slightly from M is to be found on a brown slip of paper (brM), which also has a red cross in crayon in the margin.]

[84] brM: truths

[85] brM: L.

[86] TS: formerly, → formerly [correction not in CC]

[87] brM: those → the truths

[88] brM: his enlightened contemporaries → the philosophy of enlightenment

Lessing throughout his life.[89] At any rate,[90] two years later he openly rebuked the more recent philosophers who had evaded the contradiction between wisdom and prudence by becoming much too wise to submit to the rule of prudence which had been observed by Leibniz and all the ancient philosophers. External evidence is[91] in favor of the view that the book referred to by Lessing[92] is Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*.[XXXI] The "truths in the continual contradiction of which we have to live," which had been discussed by Ferguson and which are indicated to a certain extent in the table of contents of his *Essay*,[XXXII] concerned the ambiguous character of civilization, *i.e.*[18] the theme of the two famous early writings of Rousseau, which Lessing, as[93] he perhaps felt, had not considered in his youth carefully enough[94].[XXXIII] Lessing expressed his view of the ambiguous character of civilization [6]some years later[6] in these more precise terms: even the absolutely best civil constitution is necessarily imperfect. It seems then to have been[95] the political problem[96] which gave Lessing's thought a decisive turn away from the philosophy of enlightenment indeed, yet not toward romanticism of any sort—toward what is called a deeper, historical view of government and religion[97]—, but toward an older type of philosophy. How near he apparently came to certain romantic views on his way from the philosophy of enlightenment to that older type of philosophy[98] we may learn from what F. H. Jacobi tells us in an essay of his which is devoted to the explanation of a political remark made by Lessing. According to Jacobi, Lessing once said[99] that the arguments against Papal[100] despotism are either no

[89] LS inserted "and accepted also by Lessing throughout his life" in the margin of brM. However, "also" was dropped by the typist.

[90] brM: At any rate, he censured → At any rate,

[91] M: decides → is

[92] M: in question → referred to by L.

[XXXI] Cf. von Olshausen, *loc. cit.*, 44f., who however rejects this conclusion on the basis of "internal reasons."

[XXXII] Cf. e.g. the following headings of sections: "Of the separation of arts and professions" [part IV, sect. 1] and "Of the corruption incident to polished nations" [part VI, sect. 3].

[93] Inserted in TS/CC.

[94] M: dismissed in his youth somewhat too rashly → not considered in his youth carefully enough

[XXXIII] The influence of Ferguson's mitigated Rousseauism on Lessing can be seen from a comparison of the following quotations with what Lessing says in "Ernst und Falk" on the obvious reasons of the necessary imperfection of all civil societies. Ferguson says in Part I, section 3 and 4: "The mighty engine which we suppose to have formed society, only tends to set its members at variance, or to continue their intercourse after the bands of affection are broken." "The titles of *fellow-citizen* and *countryman*, unopposed to those of *alien* and *foreigner*, to which they refer, would fall into disuse, and lose their meaning." "…it is vain to expect that we can give to the multitude of a people a sense of union among themselves, without admitting hostility to those who oppose them." See also Part IV, section 2: "…if the lot of a slave among the ancients was really more wretched than that of the indigent labourer and the mechanic among the moderns, it may be doubted, whether the superior orders, who are in possession of consideration and honours, do not proportionally fail in the dignity which befits their condition."

[95] M: At any rate, it was → It seems then to have been

[96] M: question → problem

[97] M: society and religion → government and religion

[98] TS: philosophy, → philosophy [correction not in CC]

[99] M: had remarked → once said

[100] M: papal

arguments at all, or else they are two or three times as valid against the despotism of princes.[XXXIV] Could Lessing have held[101] the view that ecclesiastical despotism is two or three times better than secular despotism?[102] Jacobi elsewhere says in his own name[103] but certainly in the spirit of Lessing, that that despotism which is based "exclusively"[104] on superstition, is less bad than secular despotism.[XXXV] Now, secular despotism could easily be allied[105] with the philosophy of enlightenment, and therewith with the rejection of exotericism strictly speaking, as is shown above all by the teaching of the classic of enlightened despotism: the teaching of Hobbes. But "despotism based exclusively on superstition," *i.e.*[18] not at all on force, cannot be maintained if the non-superstitious minority does not voluntarily refrain from [6]openly[6] exposing and refuting the "superstitious" beliefs[106]. Lessing had then not to wait for the experience of Robespierre's despotism to realize the relative truth of what the romantics asserted against the principles of J.-J.[107] Rousseau who seems to have[108] believed in a political solution of the problem of civilization: Lessing realized that [6]relative[6] truth one generation earlier[109], and he rejected it in favor of the way leading to absolute truth, or of philosophy. The experience which he had[110] in that moment enabled him to understand the meaning of Leibniz'[111] "prudence" in a manner infinitely more adequate than the enlightened Leibnizians among his contemporaries did and could do. Leibniz is then that link in the chain of the tradition of exotericism which is nearest to Lessing. Leibniz, however, was not the only 17th century thinker who was initiated. Not to mention the prudent Descartes,[112] even so bold a writer as Spinoza had admitted the necessity of "pia dogmata, hoc est, talia quae animum ad obedientiam movent"[113] as distinguished from "vera

[XXXIV] Jacobi, *Werke*, II 334 ("Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat"). Jacobi quotes in that article Ferguson's *Essay* extensively. [Cf. Jacobi, "Something that Lessing Said," translated by Dale E. Snow, in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, edited by James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 198.]

[101] M: Lessing held then → Should Lessing have held

[102] M: despotism. → despotism?

[103] M: name,

[104] M: exclusively ("einzig und allein")

[XXXV] Jacobi, *Werke*, III 469. Cf. Lessing's "Gespräch über die Soldaten und Mönche" (*Werke*, XXIV 159).

[105] M: reconciled → allied

[106] M: and attacking the increasing "superstitions" → and attacking "superstitions" → and refuting "superstitious" beliefs

[107] TS/CC: J.J. → J.-J.

[108] TS: who had → who seems to have

[109] M: before → earlier

[110] TS/CC: made → had

[111] M: Leibniz's

[112] Here a footnote was added in M by LS in pencil but not transcribed by the typist: "The early Cartesians distinguished the 'exoteric' *Discours de la méthode* from the 'acroamatic' *Meditationes*. Cf. É. Gilson's commentary on the *Discours* (Paris 1930, p. 79). Cf. e.g. *Discours de la méthode*, sixième partie, *in princ.*: writing, being an action, is subject to religious and political authority, but thought is not." See *Discourse on Method*, trans. Richard Kennington (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2007), 48.

[113] *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap. 14, § 20 (Bruder). The quotation is taken from a longer sentence: "Sequitur denique, fidem non tam requirere vera, quam pia dogmata, hoc est, talia, quae animum ad obedientiam movent; tametsi inter ea plurima sint, quae nec umbram veritatis habent, dummodo tamen

dogmata."[XXXVI] But Lessing did not have[114] to rely on any modern or[115] medieval representatives of the[116] tradition:[117] he was familiar with its sources. It was precisely his intransigent classicism—his considered view that close study of the classics is the only way in which a diligent and thinking man can become a philosopher[XXXVII]—which had led him, first, to notice the exotericism of some ancient[118] philosophers, and later on to understand the exotericism of all the ancient philosophers.

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is, qui eadem amplectitur, eadem falsa esse ignoret; alias rebellis necessario esset." ("It follows, finally, that faith does not require true dogmas so much as pious ones, that is, such as move the spirit toward obedience—even though among them there may be very many that do not have even a shadow of truth, yet so long as he who embraces them is ignorant of their being false. Otherwise he would necessarily be rebellious." Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. Martin D. Yaffe (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2004), 164.) Cf. also *SCR* 171; *PAW* 180; *GS–2* 199.

[XXXVI] *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap. 14, § 20 (Bruder). [In M the footnote continues: "Cf. cap. 15 towards the end. See also *Tract. de int. emend.* § 17 and 14 and Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 12 and 46."—The reference to the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* was inserted in M between the lines.—Cf. *PAW* 35n17.

[114] M: Lessing had not

[115] M: and → or

[116] M: that

[117] In M this sentence is preceded by two sentences: "Despite, or because of, that admission Spinoza rejected Maimonides' allegorical interpretation of the Bible as 'harmful, useless and absurd'. Thus, he cannot be considered a genuine spokesman of the tradition." Both sentences and the footnote to the Spinoza quotation ("*Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap. 7, § 87 (Bruder).") were not transcribed by the typist. In M, LS made two little marks in black ink, one before and one after the last two sentences.

[XXXVII] He writes in the 71st *Literaturbrief* (*Werke*, IV 197), after having quoted a statement of Leibniz in praise of criticism and study of the classics: "Gewiß, die Kritik auf dieser Seite betrachtet, und das Studium der Alten bis zu dieser Bekanntschaft (with Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes and Apollonius) getrieben, ist keine Pedanterei, sondern vielmehr das Mittel, wodurch Leibniz der geworden ist, der er war, und *der einzige Weg*, durch welchen sich ein fleißiger und denkender Mann ihm nähern kann." (The italics are mine.) Ten years later (1769) he says in the *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts* XLV (*Werke*, XVII 218): "Wir sehen mehr als die Alten, und doch dürften vielleicht unsere Augen schlechter sein als die Augen der Alten; die Alten sahen weniger als wir, aber ihre Augen …möchten leicht schärfer gewesen sein als unsere.—Ich fürchte, daß die ganze Vergleichung der Alten und Neuern hierauf hinauslaufen dürfte." ["Certainly, the criticism considered from this side, and the study of the ancients pushed to this familiarity (with Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes and Appolonius) is not pedantry, but in fact the means whereby Leibniz became who he was and *the only way* through which a diligent and thinking man can approach him." "We see more than the ancients, and yet perhaps our eyes might be worse than the eyes of the ancients; the ancients saw less [or, fewer things] than we, but their eyes …may easily have been sharper than ours.—I am afraid, that the entire comparison of ancients and moderns might come down to this."—Cf. "Notes on Philosophy and Revelation," in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, translated by M. Brainard (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178f.]

[118] M: classical → ancient

APPENDIX F

SUPPLEMENT 1: EARLY PLAN OF "EXOTERIC TEACHING"

A

1) To-day the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching is wholly opposed—this opposition is due to the fact that modern philosophy has destroyed the possibility of understanding—and that class. scholarship has made a tremendous progress.[1]
2) At the end of the 18th century, that distinction was still understood: Lessing.
3) Schleiermacher's criticism: he does not see any more the moral problem involved. [Schleiermacher] to whom we are indebted for the deepest insights into the element of Plato's writings

3a) Lessing—Leibniz—Hobbes[2] (vera—pia dogmata)—Spinoza—RMbM[3]—

4) Post-Ciceronian authors.
5) Cicero—but he himself is an exoteric writer.[4]
6) Plato— a) Letters Ep. II, 314a–c.[5] Ep.VII, 341a–e, 344d.[6]
   b) Phaedrus, Rep (drama and writings); Timaeus
7) Xenophon Cynegeticus.[7]

[1] Cf. the following statements in *PAW*: "We are prevented from considering this possibility [i.e., the possibility of communication of crucial issues between the lines], and still more from considering the questions connected with it, by some habits produced by, or related to, a comparatively recent progress in historical research" (*PAW* 26). "Modern historical research [...] has counteracted or even destroyed an earlier tendency to read between the lines of the great writers" (*PAW* 31f.).

[2] LS first wrote "Spinoza—Hobbes" but crossed out "Spinoza."

[3] That is, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the traditional acronym for Maimonides.

[4] Cf. *PAW* 34n16 and 185n85. See "Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis," in *GS–2* 188n29; PoP 547n29.

[5] Cf. *OPS* 29.

[6] Cf. *PAW* 35n17 and 187n90.

[7] Cf. *PAW* 29n11: "[C]ertain contemporaries of the 'rhetor' Xenophon believed that 'what is beautifully and methodically written, is not beautifully and methodically written' (*Cynegeticus*, 13.6)." See also LS to Jacob Klein, August 7, 1939, in: *GS–3* 576 and SSTX 502.

8) Plato's remarks on Homer and especially on Hesiod.[8]
9) Hesiod on Muses....[9]
10) Herakleitus
11) The big exceptions: Epicurus and Sophists.[10]
cf. Cic. *Rep*. III 16, 26,[11] N.D. I 41.[12]
cf. Usener.[13]
a) Epicurus
b) Sophists.

[8] Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, October 10, 1939, in *GS–3* 582: "To cut the matter short, what Plato says in the *Theaetetus* on the poets of the past, namely that they had disguised philosophy as poetry, can really be *demonstrated* in the case of Hesiod (who occurs in the *Republic* somewhere in the middle of an enumeration). I am convinced that it is not different in the case of Homer. One day read the *Shield of Achilles*! And the self-identification with Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and the strange fact that Thersites *says* the truth."

[9] Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, October 10, 1939, in *GS–3* 581f., esp. 582: "The key to the book are—the Muses, who are explicitly referred to as the main issue. The Muses have a twofold genealogy: 1) exoterically they descend from Zeus and Mnemosyne; 2) esoterically they are offspring of Ocean. You will immediately guess how this is connected on the basis of the beginning of the *Odyssey* as well as the remarks in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Metaphysics* on the origin of Thales' dictum." Cf. *LAM* 36f.

[10] Cf., however, *PAW* 36.

[11] See *LAM* 90 with 136n21. Cf. Cicero, *Republic* 3.16.26: "Ad haec illa dici solent primum ab iis, qui minime sunt in disserendo mali, qui in ea causa eo plus auctoritatis habent, quia, cum *de viro bono queritur, quem apertum et simplicem volumus esse, non sunt in disputando vafri, non veteratores, non malitiosi*; negant enim sapientem idcirco virum bonum esse, quod eum sua sponte ac per se bonitas et iustitia delectet, sed quod vacua metu, cura, sollicitudine, periculo vita bonorum virorum sit, contra autem improbis semper aliqui scrupus in animis haereat, semper iis ante oculos iudicia et supplicia versentur; nullum autem emolumentum esse, nullum iniustitia partum praemium tantum, semper ut timeas, semper ut adesse, semper ut impendere aliquam poenam putes, damna...." (My italics, H.K.). ("To such arguments as these the following are usually the replies first given by those who are not unskilful in disputation, and whose discussions of this subject have all the greater weight because, in the search for the good man, whom we require to be open and frank, they do not themselves use crafty and rascally tricks of argument—these men say first of all that a wise man is not good because goodness and justice of or in themselves give him pleasure, but because the life of a good man is free from fear, anxiety, worry, and danger, while on the other hand the minds of the wicked are always troubled by one thing or another, and trial and punishment always stand before their eyes. They add, on the other hand, that no advantage or reward won by injustice is great enough to offset constant fear, or the ever-present thought that some punishment is near, or is threatening,.... losses...." Cicero, *De Re Publica. De Legibus*, translated by Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 205–07.)

[12] Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.41.115: "'At etiam de sanctitate, de pietate adversus deos libros scripsit Epicurus.' At quo modo in his loquitur? Ut T. Coruncanium aut P. Scaevolam pontifices maximos te audire dicas, non eum qui sustulerit omnem funditus religionem nec manibus ut Xerxes sed rationibus deorum inmortalium templa et aras everterit". ("'Yes, but Epicurus actually wrote books about holiness and piety.' But what is the language of these books? Such that you think you are listening to a Coruncanius or a Scaevola, high priests, not to the man who destroyed the very foundations of religion, and overthrew—not by main force like Xerxes, but by argument—the temples and the altars of the immortal gods." Cicero, *De Natura Deorum. Academica*, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 111.) Cf. also 1.44.122f.: "'At etiam liber est Epicuri de sanctitate.' Ludimur ab homine non tam faceto quam ad scribendi licentiam libero." ("'Why, but Epicurus (you tell me) actually wrote a treatise on holiness.' Epicurus is making fun of us, though he is not so much a humorist as a loose and careless writer." Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 119.)

[13] Hermann Usener published a collection of fragments called *Epicurea* in 1887. For the Cicero quotations from the previous footnote, cf. *Epicurea* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1966), 100.

B. Explanation: Gellius XX 5:[14] res civiles—subtiliores

↓
(natura)

Exoteric philosophy is a Weltanschauung σῴζων political and moral life: makes man the center of the universe.[15]

Esoteric philosophy sees man in his insignificance.[16]

Disproportion of things political and things speculative—cf. Ar. on laws and τέχναι.[17]

Quieta movere and Quieta non movere[18]

Philosophy as essentially unrevolutionary and as interested only in truth.

Lessing had not to wait for the French Revolution in order to separate himself from the philosophy of Enlightenment.

Lie in the soul—lie in speech.[19]

[14] See Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5: "Commentationum suarum artiumque quas discipulis tradebat Aristoteles philosophus, regis Alexandri magister, duas species habuisse dicitur. Alia erant, quae nominabat ἐξωτερικά, alia, quae appellabat ἀκροατικά. Ἐξωτερικά dicebantur, quae ad rhetoricas meditationes facultatemque argutiarum *civilumque rerum* notitiam conducebant, ἀκροατικά autem vocabantur, in quibus philosophia remotior *subtiliorque* agitabatur quaeque ad *naturae* contemplationes disceptationesve dialecticas pertinebant" (My italics, H.K.). ("The philosopher Aristotle, the teacher of king Alexander, is said to have had two forms of the lectures and instructions which he delivered to his pupils. One of these was the kind called ἐξωτερικά, or 'exoteric,' the other ἀκροατικά, or 'acroatic.' Those were called 'exoteric' which he gave training in rhetorical exercises, logical subtlety, and acquaintance with politics; those were called 'acroatic' in which more profound and recondite philosophy was discussed, which related to the contemplation of nature or dialectic discussions." Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 431–33.)

[15] Cf. *LAM* 93; *NRH* 155 and 248.

[16] Cf. *GS–1* 244f.; *SCR* 190.

[17] Cf. *CM* 21f.: "[Aristotle] is much less sure than Hippodamus of the virtues of innovation. It seems that Hippodamus had not given thought to the difference between innovation in the arts and innovation in law, or to the possible tension between the need for political stability and what one might call technological change."

[18] LS is alluding to the legal maxim "stare decisis, et non quieta movere" ("to stand by decisions and not to move quietude") that calls for the adherence to precedents and warns against changes. In Germany, "quieta non movere" became well known after Bismarck mentioned the proverb in a speech in 1891: "There is an old, good political proverb: *Quieta non movere*, that means, do not disturb what rests quietly; and this is truly conservative: not to support a legislation which upsets something for which no need for change exists." Cf. Otto von Bismarck, *Werke in Auswahl*, edited by Rudolf Buchner and Georg Engel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), vol. 8 (B), 73.

[19] Cf. Plato, *Republic* 382a–e and 535d–e. See *PAW* 35 and *WIPP* 136.

APPENDIX F

SUPPLEMENT 2: LATER PLAN OF "EXOTERIC TEACHING"

Plan.

I

1. Philosophy and class. scholarship; Zeller.
2. Husserl: Philos. als strenge Wiss. und Philos. als Weltanschauung.[1]
3. Lessing'[s] explanation of exotericism.
4. Schleiermacher'[s] criticism of exotericism. Hegel's criticism of exotericism.[2]
5. The basis of Lessing's rediscovery of exotericism: the political problem.

[1]The second point of the list was inserted in the margin. The numbers of the first part of the plan were changed accordingly.—Edmund Husserl's "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" was first published in *Logos* 1, no. 3 (1911): 289–341. In his late essay "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," LS writes: "Let us see whether a place for political philosophy is left in Husserl's philosophy. What I am going to say is based on a re-reading, after many years of neglect, of Husserl's programmatic essay 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science.' The essay was first published in 1911, and Husserl's thought underwent many important changes afterward. Yet it is his most important utterance on the question with which we are concerned" (*SPPP* 34). In the same essay, LS also deals with Husserl's view of "Weltanschauung" (*SPPP* 36f.).

[2]The second part of this point was inserted in the margin.—Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, in *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 19, 21f.: "Eine andere Schwierigkeit soll die sein: man unterscheidet exoterische und esoterische Philosophie. Tennemann sagt ([*Geschichte der Philosophie*,] Bd. II, S. 220): 'Platon bediente sich desselben Rechts, welches jedem Denker zusteht, von seinen Entdeckungen nur so viel, als er für gut fand, und nur denen mitzuteilen, welchen er Empfänglichkeit zutraute. Auch Aristoteles hatte eine esoterische und exoterische Philosophie, nur mit dem Unterschiede, daß bei diesem der Unterschied bloß *formal*, beim Plato hingegen auch zugleich *material* war.' Wie einfältig! Das sieht aus, als sei der Philosoph im Besitz seiner Gedanken wie der äußerlichen Dinge. Die Gedanken sind aber ganz etwas anderes. Die philosophische Idee besitzt umgekehrt den Menschen. Wenn Philosophen sich über philosophische Gegenstände explizieren, so müssen sie sich nach ihren Ideen richten; sie können sie nicht in der Tasche behalten. Spricht man auch mit einigen äußerlich, so ist die Idee immer darin enthalten, wenn die Sache nur Inhalt hat. Zur Mitteilung, Übergabe einer äußerlichen Sache gehört nicht viel, aber zur Mitteilung der Idee gehört Geschicklichkeit. Sie bleibt immer etwas Esoterisches; man hat also nicht bloß das Exoterische der Philosophen. Das sind oberflächliche Vorstellungen." ("Another difficulty is said to be the following: a distinction is made between exoteric and esoteric

6. Lessing—Leibniz—Spinoza (—RMbM)
7. Lessing'[s] intransigent classicism.

II[3]

7. Aristotle's "exoteric" writings.[4]
8. Cicero.
9. Xenoph. Cyneg.
10. Plato's Letters
11. Plato's dialogues. Phaedrus Rep Timaeus.
12. Plato on the poets
    and Hesiod on Muses.
13. Herakleitus
14. The big exceptions: Epicurus and Sophists. Cic. Rep. III

The questions: Why do they hide? and How can we decipher their truths will be discussed in[5] the continuation of this article. The historian cannot do more than to show that the ancient philosophers did hide their thoughts, that their works are—mixtures of truth and lies. The question of why they did it, must be answered by a philosopher.

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philosophy. Tennemann ([*Geschichte der Philosophie*,] vol. II, 220) says: 'Plato exercised the same right that every thinker has to communicate only so much of his discoveries as he thought good, and only to those whom he credited with capacity to receive it. Aristotle, too, had an esoteric and an exoteric philosophy, but with the difference, that in his case the distinction was merely *formal*, while in the case of Plato it was at the same time *material*.' How simpleminded! This looks as if the philosopher is in possession of his thoughts in the same way as of external things. But the thoughts are something utterly different. Instead of the reverse, the philosophic idea is in possession of the human being. When philosophers elaborate on philosophic subjects, they have to follow [the course of] their ideas; they cannot keep them in their pocket. Even when speaking externally [*äußerlich*] to some people, the idea must be contained [in this speech], if the matter [*Sache*] has any content at all. It does not take much to hand over an external item, but the communication of ideas requires skill. The idea always remains something esoteric; hence, one does not merely have the exoteric [*das Exoterische*] of the philosophers. These notions are superficial.")

[3] The second part of this plan has been published previously by Heinrich Meier in the introduction to *Die Denkbewegung von Leo Strauss. Die Geschichte der Philosophie und die Intention des Philosophen* (Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1996), 15n4.

[4] Cf. *PAW* 28: "After the great theologian Schleiermacher asserted, with an unusually able argument, the view that there is only one Platonic teaching, the question of the esotericism of the ancient philosophers was narrowed down, for all practical purposes, to *the meaning of Aristotle's* '*exoteric speeches*'; and in this regard one of the greatest humanists of the present day asserts that the attribution of a secret teaching to Aristotle is 'obviously a late invention originating in the spirit of Neo-Pythagoreanism.'" (My italics, H.K.) Aristotle refers at least eight times in his works to *exōterikoi logoi* (cf., for example, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a26 and 1140a3, *Politics*, 1278b31 and 1323a22 as well as *Metaphysics*, 1076a28).

[5] LS first wrote "in a separate" but crossed it out.

APPENDIX G

LEO STRAUSS: LECTURE NOTES FOR "PERSECUTION AND THE ART OF WRITING" (1939)

Edited by Hannes Kerber

[1 recto] *Persecution and the Art of Writing.*

The purpose of this lecture[1] is to draw your attention to a certain approach to earlier literature—to an approach which, to my mind, has not been sufficiently considered. I do not say that the approach which I am going to suggest, is necessarily correct, but I believe that it is worth considering. As my starting-point, I shall choose certain phenomena which are accessible to everyone's observation, at least to-day, if not at all times.

Before I start, I want to point out one example of the questions which [2]originally[2] led me to consider the approach in question. You all know the *Don Quixote*[3]—you know the story and the characters—you remember how Cervantes interrupts his account of Don Quixote's fight with the Biscainer[4] because, he says, he does not know the continuation—how Cervantes, as he recounts, was looking around everywhere for the continuation until he discovered by chance an Arabic MS. on the exchange in Toledo, how he got it translated into Castilian[5]—thus, the larger part of that immortal work claims to be translated from the Arabic, it claims to be written, not by Cervantes, but by Sid Hamed, a Muslim.[6]—Why does Cervantes

[1] Cf. p. 273n10..

[2] Inserted by LS in pencil between the lines or in the margin.

[3] According to German custom, LS prefaces the title of *Don Quixote* with the definite article, in order to distinguish for the listeners his mentioning the book from his mentioning the hero.

[4] That is, the Biscayan.

[5] Cf. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, chapter IX. Cf., for example, *NRH* 62; *CM* 158; *OPS* 169–70. See also "The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates," in *Interpretation* 23, no. 2 (1996): 152.

[6] Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, August 18, 1939, in *GS–3* 580f.: "Since we are talking about exotericism—epaggelomai [I announce] that I have understood *Don Quixote*. The key is this: the book is the work of two authors, of Cervantes and of Sid Hamed, *i.e.*, a Christian and a Muslim. Now take away the artificial

tell this obvious lie? Is this just a joke for joke's sake? Everyone admits that the *Don Quixote* is a *deep* book, Don Quixote is not just a fool, he *represents* something, certainly a folly, but a *great* folly, an *eternal* folly. What is then the reason that he makes such a strange joke concerning the authorship of the book, that he attributes the authorship to Sid Hamed? What is the *relation* of that strange joke to the eternal folly represented by Don Quixote?

Cervantes satirizes the books of chivalry. This is his professed intention. Accordingly the books of chivalry which drove Don Quixote mad, are burned by the priest and barber of Don Quixote's hometown, i.e. by the authority spiritual and temporal.[7] But, before they are burned, priest and barber discuss the merits and demerits of those books, and they find that they are *innocent*, and that quite a few of them are even good literature. Why does then Cervantes satirize the whole *genre*? Because of the idiotic imitations which abounded one or two generations before Cervantes wrote the *Don Quixote*? Are we to believe that a man of Cervantes' rank shall waste his time with satirizing an ephemeral fashion? No—for all good books are, and are *meant* to be, possessions for all times.[8]

We might be inclined to say: well, difficulties or inconsistencies of that kind occur in practically all great books—aliquando dormitat bonus Homerus[9]—May be. But may it not also be that we are somewhat *naive* as regards those books and their authors? That we underestimate the clarity of thought, the power of expression, the imagination, and, above all, the willingness and love for *work* (φιλοπονία)[10] of these men? If they were inconsistent and sometimes[11] insipid—may they not have *wished* to be inconsistent and insipid? may they not have *wished* to give us some riddles to solve? may it not be that the deficiencies of their works—all those

split of the one author, then you see that the author is Christian as well as Muslim, *i.e.*, neither of the two. The author is therefore a philosopher, and Don Quixote represents the founder of a religion and Sancho Panza the believer. In fact, Don Quixote is the synthesis of Christianity (sorrowful countenance) and Islam (holy war); he is superior to his predecessors in that he is furthermore educated and polite. Dulcinea is Mary. The allusions to the Reformation, for example, are abundant. Consider also the role of *books* in *Don Quixote*: Christianity and Islam are based on books. The deeds of Don Quixote are miracles. Read the book on occasion again, and you will see that this is the case."

[7] Cf. APT in *GS–2* 222: "Of Christian origin is, above all, Abravanel's general conception of the government of the Jewish nation. According to him, that government consists of two kinds of governments, of a government human and of a government spiritual or divine. This distinction is simply the Christian distinction between the authority spiritual and the authority temporal." Cf. *GS–2* 225. See also *NRH* 253–54.

[8] For the source of the expression, see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.4 ("And, indeed, [the *History*] has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time." Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War,* translated by Charles Forster Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), vol. 1, 41. Cf., for example, *PAW* 160; *CM* 142–43, 157, 159, 228.

[9] "Sometimes [even] good Homer nods."—For the source of this proverbial expression, see Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, 358–60 ("…et idem / indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus, / verum operi longo fas est obrepere somnum."). Cf. *PAW* 26.

[10] Cf., for example, Plato, *Republic*, 535d and *Alcibiades I*, 122c; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 21.6. Cf. *XSD* 79 with 200.

[11] LS first wrote "somewhat" but later replaced it by "sometimes."

deficiencies exploited by 19th century higher criticism[12]—are *intentional* and *deliberate*? [2]At this point, we are helped somewhat by an experience we are unfortunate enough to make to-day.[2]

[1 verso]

<1. Persecution → writing between the lines.

2. Persecution in the past → writing between the lines in the past.

II 3. Of the danger of reading between the lines: what is the difference between legitimate reading between the lines and arbitrary guess work?[13]

Only if reading between the lines: more *exact* and more *exacting* than ordinary reading, can it claim any consideration.[14]

Reading between the lines as regards the books in question, is *necessarily* more exact than our ordinary reading: for a teaching transmitted between the lines, is addressed to *very careful* readers only.

Only the greatest care in reading can discover that teaching.[15]

But which are the cases in which we are entitled or rather compelled to read between the lines?

In all cases in which ordinary reading is not sufficient to lead to an adequate understanding. E.g. if we find insipid passages which a high school [boy] would be ashamed of having written, in books of first class writers.[16]

III 4. Two types of persecution-literature.[17]

Generalization of "persecution" › social ostracism.[18]

How far do earlier writers, *as a matter of principle*, conceal their most significant opinions?

Common to both types: conceal with regard to social conformity, which is either merely enforced (modern type) or even desired?>

[3 recto][19] <is opposed to the orthodox view in its entirety, although he pays lip-service to it on every page and in every sentence. If we read that author again, but more vigilantly, and less innocently, we can be certain that we find many more traces of his independence than the ones which struck us first.

[12] Cf. *PAW* 30–31.

[13] Cf. *PAW* 27, 30, 32; *WIPP* 224, 231; *OT* 27; ONI 351–52.

[14] Cf. *PAW* 30.

[15] Cf. *PAW* 144.

[16] Cf. *PAW* 30; *TM* 36; *WIPP* 223. The passage about the high-school boy may be an allusion to a statement made by G. W. F. Hegel in the introduction (§3) of the *Philosophy of Right*. (See *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 7, 39–40.

[17] Cf. *PAW* 33–34.

[18] Cf. *PAW* 32–33, *WIPP* 170.

[19] Unfortunately, the second page of the manuscript seems to have been lost.

In some cases, we are fortunate enough to possess *explicit* evidence[17] either by the authors or by intelligent philosophers[20] proving that the author hides his real views, and indicates them only between the lines.>[21]

Lessing to MM: "You are more fortunate than other honest people who can *destroy* the most loathsome structure of non-sense (sc. the orthodoxy in question) only by pretending that they want to give it a new foundation."[22]

Hobbes: points out at several occasions that he uttered certain "novel" views during the Commonwealth only, i.e. at a time when the Elizabethan laws against heresy were no longer valid.

and to Aubrey on Spinoza's *Tr. theol-pol.*: he had not *dared* to write so *boldly*.[23]

We have to base our interpretation of Hobbes preferably on the works published under the Commonwealth, and, in case we find two sets of statements, one nearer to orthodoxy and another, contradictory, more remote from orthodoxy—we have to consider the latter to be his true opinions.[24]

<"*Of Liberty and Necessity*" (London 1654, p. 35f.): "I must confess, if we consider the greatest part of Mankind, not as they should be, but as they are,…I must, I say, confess that the dispute of this question will rather hurt than help their piety; and therefore if his Lordship had not desired this answer, I should not have written it, nor do I write it but in hopes your Lordship and his, will keep it private.">[25]

4. Of the whole literature which teaches the truth concerning the crucial questions exclusively between the lines, there are two types.[26] The difference of these two types corresponds to the difference of attitudes men may have towards persecution.

a) The view most familiar to us, is that persecution is *accidental*, that it is an outcome of a bad construction of the body politic; according to that view, persecution *ought* to be replaced, and *can* be replaced, by freedom of speech; nay, persecution *will* be replaced by freedom of speech.

That view presupposes that the truth about the most important things can be made accessible to the general public, i.e. that popular science is possible (Hobbes: Paulatim eruditur vulgus).[27] Belief in *progress*. A man who holds this view of persecution, writes and publishes his books in order to *fight* persecution, in order to

[20] Inserted by LS between the lines. He first put "authors or by intelligent and benevolent contemporaries" but then crossed "and benevolent contemporaries" out and wrote "philosophers."

[21] Cf. *PAW* 32.

[22] Lessing to Moses Mendelssohn, January 9, 1771, in *Werke*, edited by Helmuth Kiesel with Georg Braungart, Klaus Fischer and Ute Wahl (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988), vol. 11.2, 146.

[23] See *Die Religionskritik des Hobbes* in *GS–3* 277n20, *HCR* 32n20, *WIPP* 274. Cf. *WIPP* 171 and *PAW* 183.

[24] Cf. *PAW* 185–86.

[25] See *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1840), vol. IV, 256–57. Cf. *PAW* 34n15.

[26] Cf. *PAW* 33–34.

[27] "Gradually the vulgar become educated." See Hobbes, *De Homine*, 14.13, in *Opera latina*, edited by William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839), vol. II, 128. Cf. *PAW* 34n15; *NRH* 200; ONI 360; *Die Religionskritik des Hobbes*, in *GS–3* 348n243; *HCR* 94n243.

contribute to the establishment of freedom of speech. And he *hides* his view *merely* for fear of persecution, for fear of violent death or prison or exile.[28]

b) According to another view, persecution is *essential*, or necessary, and *will* not be superseded, and *ought* not to be superseded. What *we* call persecution, the adherent of that view would call: uniformity of thought as regards the fundamentals, among the citizens; such a uniformity, he holds, is a prerequisite of any [2]healthy[2] political life. And such a uniformity[29] ought not to be endangered by public utterance of divergent views, [3 verso] <however true>. <He holds that the requirements of political and social life are different from, and in a sense opposed to, the requirements of philosophy or science:

the principle of political or social life is: quieta non movere[30]

the principle of philosophy and science, of theoretical life is: quieta movere

Arts and sciences *ought* to progress—but laws and customs ought to remain as stable as possible.[31] This view combines then intellectual radicalism with political and social conservatism. An author of that kind hides his heterodox views not merely for fear, but as a matter of duty towards the Commonwealth. Therefore, his technique of hiding is much more elaborate than that of an author who is interested in political or social change. Therefore, his real views are much more difficult[32] to decipher, and, thus, his books are much more intriguing and interesting.[33]

[2]Generalization of our topic: *society and individual, thinking individual*—society and thought—How far do earlier authors, *as a matter of principle*, conceal their opinions? How far is earlier technique of writing *different* from present-day technique?[2]

Generally speaking, a) is modern, and b) is ancient and medieval. Yet, we find quite a few examples of the second type up to the 18th century.

I wish to speak mainly of the second type. For it is by far the more interesting and important. Not merely historically, but also for us: that type produced the very highest kind of literature in existence—a kind of literature which *has* provided men, and *will* provide men as long as they read at all, with the best and most solid kind of *education*.[34] By being silent to all but extremely careful and vigilant readers, they compel us to be as careful and as vigilant, as flexible and as resourceful as we possibly can. And thus, they educate us.>

If people hide their opinions, they will not *say* that they hide them, or at least they will not say it too loud—or else they would defeat their own purpose. Therefore, explicit evidence in support of the view that an author hides his opinions, is relatively rare. There is however a number of statements to this effect in existence.[35]

[28] Cf. SSTX 535: "It would, however, betray too low a view of the philosophic writers of the past if one assumed that they concealed their thoughts merely for fear of persecution or of violent death."

[29] LS first wrote "prerequisite" but later replaced it by "uniformity."

[30] Cf. above, p. 289n18.

[31] Cf., for example, *CM* 21–22.

[32] LS first wrote "hidden" but later replaced it by "difficult."

[33] Cf. *PAW* 34.

[34] Cf. *PAW* 37.

[35] Cf. *PAW* 32.

I have mentioned *Lessing* already. Lessing has written two treatises on the theology and philosophy of *Leibniz*,[36] which show that Leibniz had two kinds of teaching, a public and a private teaching. Lessing's interpretation of that procedure surpasses in depth everything I know of, written in the modern period. Another writing of Lessing's, *Dialogues on freemasonry*,[37] sets it beyond doubt that the method of Leibniz he analyzed in the 2 treaties mentioned, was used by himself as well: it was his settled principle not to state in his publications explicitly, what he really thought of the then crucial question. A few years after his death, a private conversation of his was published,[38] which gave people an idea, if a superficial one, that the ordinary reader of Lessing's writings, i.e. he who did not read between the lines, did not know Lessing's view concerning the most important questions at all.[39]

Montesquieu is another author of that kind. In a recent discussion of his *Spirit of [the] Laws*, complaint is made of the total lack of order of that work, and of the surprising amount of irrelevance to be met with in it.[40] An extremely intelligent contemporary of Montesquieu, d'Alembert, gives us some information about the apparent deficiencies of Montesquieu's work. "We say of the *obscurity* which one may permit oneself in a book of that kind, the same what we said of the *lack of order*. What would be obscure for ordinary readers, is not obscure for those whom that author had in mind. Besides, *voluntary* obscurity is not really obscurity. M. de Montesquieu had to present sometimes important truths, the absolute and direct statement of which might have offended without bringing any benefits; therefore he had the *prudence* to envelop them; and by this *innocent artifice*, he hid them from them [4 recto] to whom they would be harmful,[41] without making them inaccessible to the wise."[42] Another friend of M. speaks of the "wonderful, *if hidden* order" of the *Spirit of [the] Laws*.[43] That is to say: the first task of the interpreter has to be: to find out the reasons why M. discusses, say, this topic in this [2]strange[2] place.

[36] LS is alluding to "Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen" and "Des Andreas Wissowatius Einwürfe wider die Dreieinigkeit," in Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 7, 472–501 and 548–81. Cf. *PAW* 182.

[37] LS is referring to *Ernst und Falk*. Cf. Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 10, 11–66. An English translation by C. Maschler can be found in *Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (1986): 14–48.

[38] In 1785, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi published *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (*On Spinoza's Teaching, in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*). In this book, he reports a conversation with Lessing in July 1780. LS gives a detailed account of the controversy between Jacobi and Mendelssohn that followed the publication of the book (the "Spinozismusstreit") in his introduction to Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden* and *An die Freunde Lessings*. The introduction, written in 1937, was first published in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 3.2, edited by Leo Strauss (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1974), xi–xcv; reprinted in *GS–2* 528–605; English translation in *LSMM* 59–145.

[39] In the margin, LS wrote "*Rousseau* p.m. 126, n. 2 and cf. *2nd Discours* p. 40–41 with *Contrat social* IV 8." The abbreviation "p.m." is short for "penes me" (in my possession).

[40] LS is probably referring to George H. Sabine's *A History of Political Theory*. Cf. *PAW* 28–29.

[41] LS first wrote "dangerous" but later replaced it with "harmful."

[42] This passage from Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert's *Éloge de Montesquieu* is quoted in *PAW* 29n11.

[43] Cf. *PAW* 29n11 with Stefano Bertolini, *Analyse raisonnée de l'Esprit des Lois*: "Voilà l'économie de cet ouvrage magnifique. A la peinture que je viens de tracer, quelque foible qu'elle soit, il est aisé de voir que dans ce livre de l'*Esprit des Lois* règnent la précision, la justesse, un ordre merveilleux; ordre peut-être caché aux yeux de ceux qui ne sauroient marcher que de conséquence en conséquence, toujours

Spinoza: one of the rules of life he set up for himself: ad captum vulgi loqui (to adapt his language to the language of the vulgar).[44] Tradition has it that the inscription of his signet is: "Caute."[45] It would be a mistake to think that Spinoza's *Ethics* is *not* written in the language of the vulgar. "Evasive".

Descartes makes this entry in his diary: "Up to now, I have been a spectator of this theatre of the world; but now being about to ascend the stage of that theatre, I put on a mask, just as the comedians do who do not wish that their feeling of shame would[46] become visible." ("Ut comoedi, moniti ne in fronte appareat pudor, personam induunt, sic ego, hoc mundi theatrum conscensurus, in quo hactenus spectator exstiti, larvatus prodeo." *Oeuvres* X 213).[47]

Accordingly, he demands that *some months* shall be devoted to the perusal of the 1st Meditation (VII 130).[48] *Writing* is an *action*, and as such subject to the political and ecclesiastical authorities; but *thought* recognizes no authority but *reason* (Discours VI in princ.).[49] The *real* views of Desc. are not to be found *in* his writings but *between the lines* of his writings.

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guidés par des définitions, des divisions, des avant-propos, des distinctions, mais qui paroît dans tout son jour aux esprits attentifs, capables de suppléer d'eux-mêmes les conséquences qui naissent des principes, et assez habiles pour rapprocher et joindre dans la chaîne des vérités établies celles qui s'ensuivent, qui, aux yeux des connoisseurs, ne sont, pour ainsi dire, couvertes que d'un voile transparent." ("Here is the layout of this magnificent work. In the picture I have just sketched, however inadequate it may be, it is easy to see the precision, accuracy, and wonderful order that reign in this book, *The Spirit of Laws*. It is an order hidden perhaps from the eyes of those who can only proceed from consequence to consequence, always guided by definitions, divisions, forewords, and distinctions, but which appears fully illuminated to attentive minds, who are capable by themselves of supplying those consequences born of principles, and who are skillful enough to bring forth and connect to the chain of established truths those truths that follow therefrom, which in the eyes of experts, are, so to speak, covered only by a transparent veil.") The *Analyse* was reprinted in the *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, edited by Édouard Laboulaye (Paris: Granier, 1876), vol. III, here 60.

[44] In his *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* (sect. 17), Spinoza declares as one of his *regulae vivendi*: "Ad captum vulgi loqui, et illa omnia operari, quae nihil impedimenti adferunt, quominus nostrum scopum attingamus." (*Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), vol. II, 9.) In the article "How to Study Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*," LS translates the sentence in the following way: "To speak with a view to the capacity of the vulgar and to practice all those things which cannot hinder us from reaching our goal (*sc.* the highest good)." (*PAW* 177, cf. 177–97.)

[45] Cf. *PAW* 180.

[46] LS first wrote "might" but later replaced it with "would."

[47] LS quotes the first few lines of the *Cognitiones privatae* in the edition by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1897–1913).

[48] LS is referring to the *Responsio ad secundas objectiones* in the same edition.

[49] Cf. Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, edited by Étienne Gilson. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1939), 60 (beginning of part 6): "Or, il y a maintenant trois ans que j'étais parvenu à la fin du traité qui contient toutes ces choses, et que je commençais à le revoir, afin de le mettre entre les mains d'un imprimeur, lorsque j'appris que des personnes, à qui je défère et dont l'autorité ne peut guère moins sur mes actions que ma propre raison sur mes pensées, avaient désapprouvé une opinion de physique, publiée un peu auparavant par quelque autre, de laquelle je ne veux pas dire que je fusse, mais bien que je n'y avais rien remarqué, avant leur censure, que je pusse imaginer être préjudiciable ni à la religion ni à l'État, ni, par conséquent, qui m'eût empêché de l'écrire, si la raison me l'eût persuadée, et que cela me fit craindre qu'il ne s'en trouvât tout de même quelqu'une entre les miennes, en laquelle je me fusse mépris, nonobstant le grand soin que j'ai toujours eu de n'en point recevoir de nouvelles en ma créance, dont je n'eusse des démonstrations très certaines, et de n'en point écrire qui pussent tourner

Bacon. "I sometimes alter the uses and definitions (of the traditional terms), according to the *moderate* proceeding in civil government; where although there be some alteration, yet that holdeth which Tacitus wisely noteth, *Eadem magistratuum vocabula*." (Ann. I 3).[50] (Advanc. p. 92).[51]

Note his interest in *ciphers*.

The *arcana imperii* literature in the 16th century (Lipsius[52] etc.).
"Government…is a part of knowledge secret and retired, in both these respects in which things are deemed secret; for some things are secret because they are hard to know, and some because they are *not fit to utter*…even unto the general rules and discourses of policy and government is due a reverent and reserved handling." (205f.).[53] No wonder that he did not finish his utopia, *New Atlantis*, and that he omitted practically everything *political* from it.

The writers I have mentioned, are not the inventors of such techniques. They make use of a *tradition*, of the traditional distinction between *exoteric* teaching and *esoteric* teaching. An esoteric[54] teaching is *not*, as some present day scholars seem to think, a *mystical* teaching: it is the *scientific* teaching. Exoteric = popular. Esoteric = scientific and *therefore* secret.

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au désavantage de personne." ("It is now three years since I completed the treatise that contains all these things, and began to review it before putting it in the hands of the printer, when I learned that certain persons to whom I defer, and whose authority over my actions can scarcely be less than that of my own reason over my thoughts, had disapproved of certain opinions in physics, published shortly before by someone else. I do not wish to say that I agreed with it, but since I had noticed nothing in it before their censure that I could imagine to be prejudicial either to religion or to the state, or consequently that would have prevented me from writing it if reason had so persuaded me, this made me fear that there might nevertheless be found among my thoughts some one that was mistaken, despite the great care I have always taken not to receive new ones among my beliefs of which I did not have very certain demonstrations, and to write nothing that could turn to the disadvantage of anyone." Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Richard Kennington (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2007), 48)—Cf. *PAW* 182–83.

[50] Cf. Tacitus, *The Annals*, 1.3: "Domi res tranquillae, *eadem magistratuum vocabula*; iuniores post Actiacam victoriam, etiam senes plerique inter bella civium nati: quotus quisque reliquus, qui rem publicam vidisset?" (My italics, H.K.) ("At home all was calm. The officials carried the old names; the younger men had been born after the victory of Actium; most even of the elder generation, during the civil wars; few indeed were left who had seen the Republic." Tacitus, *The Histories. The Annals*, translated by Clifford H. Moore/John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), vol. 2, 249.)

[51] Cf. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, edited by Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 81: "But to me on the other side that do desire as much as lyeth in my Penne, to ground a sociable entercourse between Antiquitie and Proficience, it seemeth best, to keepe way with Antiquitie *vsque ad aras*; And therefore to retaine the ancient tearmes, though I sometimes alter the vses and definitions, according to the Moderate proceeding in Ciuill gouernment; where although there bee some alteration, yet that holdeth which *Tacitus* wisely noteth, *Eadem Magistratuum vocabula*." Cf. *PAW* 183.

[52] For Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), cf. *CM* 144; *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*, in *GS–3* 100–4.

[53] Cf. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 179: "Concerning gouernment, it is a part of knowledge, secret and retyred in both these respects, in which things are deemed secret: for some things are secret, because they are hard to know, and some because they are not fit to vtter: wee see all gouernments are obscure and inuisible. […] Neuerthelesse euen vnto the generall rules and discourses of pollicie, and gouernment, there is due a reuerent and reserued handling." Cf. *PAW* 57n63.

[54] LS first wrote "exoteric" but later replaced it with "esoteric".

Tradition has it that *Aristotle* wrote two kinds of books: exoteric and esoteric books. But the content of the esoteric books was originally not destined for publication at all: they are still called *acroamatic*, oral.[55] Scientific teaching was oral teaching, because written teaching cannot remain secret. The truth cannot and ought not to be published—i.e. the truth about the highest things—what *can* be published, are things which *are* public in themselves, ἔνδοξα, moral and political things.

[4 verso]The story of the correspondence between Alexander the Great and Aristotle: Alexander complained to Aristotle that Ar. had published his oral teaching. Ar. answer: those *books are published and not published*; for they are intelligible only to those who have heard my lectures.[56]

This tradition may be spurious. But even spurious traditions are significant.

The attitude presupposed by that tradition, is certainly much older than the Christian period. We find it clearly expressed in the 2nd and 7th of the *Platonic* letters. I believe, they are genuine[57]—but even if not, the "forger" knew more of Plato than we know.

[55] Cf. Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5. Cf. above, p. 289n14.

[56] Cf. Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5: "Eos libros generis 'acroatici' cum in vulgus ab eo editos rex Alexander cognovisset atque ea tempestate armis exercitam omnem prope Asiam teneret regemque ipsum Darium proeliis et victoriis urgeret, in illis tamen tantis negotiis litteras ad Aristotelem misit, non eum recte fecisse, quod disciplinas acroaticas, quibus ab eo ipse eruditus foret, libris foras editis involgasset: 'Nam qua,' inquit, 'alia re praestare ceteris poterimus, si ea quae ex te accepimus omnium prosus fient communia? Quippe ego doctrina anteire malim quam copiis atque opulentiis.' Rescripsit ei Aristoteles ad hanc sententiam: 'Acroaticos libros, quos editos quereris et non proinde ut arcana absconditos, neque editos scito esse neque non editos, quoniam his solis cognobiles erunt, qui nos audiverunt.'" ("When King Alexander knew that he [sc. Aristotle] had published those books of the 'acroatic' set, although at that time the king was keeping almost all of Asia in state of panic by his deeds of arms, and was pressing King Darius himself hard by attacks and victories, yet in the midst of such urgent affairs he sent a letter to Aristotle, saying that the philosopher had not done right in publishing the books and so revealing to the public the acroatic training, in which he himself [sc. Alexander] had been instructed. 'For in what other way,' said he, 'can I excel the rest, if that instruction which I have received from you becomes the common property of all the world? For I would rather be first in learning than in wealth and power.' Aristotle replied to him to this purport: 'Know that the acroatic books, which you complain have been made public and not hidden as if they contained secrets, have neither been made public nor hidden, since they can be understood only by those who have heard my lectures.'" Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 433–35.) See also Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 7.

[57] Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, November 28, 1939, in *GS–3* 586: "By now, I am firmly convinced that *all* Platonic letters (even the first) are genuine: they are the Platonic counterpart [*Gegenstück*] to Xenophon's *Anabasis*: they are supposed to show that the author has not been corrupted by Socrates: while the author constantly veils himself in the dialogues, it is the purpose of the letters as well as of the *Anabasis* to show that the one who veils himself is absolutely harmless, absolutely *normal*. He unveils himself as normal by writing the first three and the last letter to a tyrant (Dionysius); moreover: the letters which are directed at philosophers deal *exclusively* with πολιτικά, philosophy is discussed only in letters to πολιτικοι, and in such a way that close reading fully destroys the fiction on which the whole matter is based: the seventh letter is precisely in the middle!"

[58] Cf. *OPS* 29.

Ep. II (314a–c).[58] Ep.VII (332d):[59]
a) the teaching cannot [be] "said" at all.
b) it can be "said" in writing or in speech, but well or badly.
c) saying it badly = stating it in *writing fully* to the *public*.

Plato's *dialogues*. The *Phaedrus* on the danger inherent in all writing. A writing does not know to whom it ought to *talk* and to whom it ought to be *silent* (276a6–7). This is so important *because* the truth is not fit for everybody. Inferiority of all writing to oral instruction. "It is hard to find the father of all things, but to *speak* of him unto *all men* is impossible." *Timaeus*.[60]

But Plato did write books about the most important topics: on nature, ideas, idea of the good, soul etc. How can we reconcile his refusal to write about such topics with his actual practice? Only by assuming that he did write and did *not* write about them at the same time. Just as Aristotle is said to have said of his esoteric works: they are published and they are *not* published. Books *do* speak and be [recte: are?] silent according to the capacities of the reader. Plato *did* write about the truth: but he did it *enigmatically*.

All Platonic writings are *dialogues*. Dialogues are a kind of *dramas* (dramas in prose and without women and nearer to comedy than to tragedy).[61] What is the characteristic feature of ²the² drama according to *Plato*? Drama is that kind of poetry in which the author *hides* himself.[62] By writing *dialogues*, Plato gives us to understand that he hides himself, i.e. his *thought*. *Plato* never said a word on his teaching—only his characters do. But his *main* character, Socrates, does *not*[63] speak when the highest topic, the κόσμος, or the being, is discussed: Timaeus or the Eleatic stranger.

Plato's *school*. The Academic philosophers, the successors of Plato, say: In order to discover the truth, one must dispute pro and con as regards everything. The adversary: "I should like to see *what* they have discovered." The Academic: "We are not used to show[ing] it." Adversary: "But what in the world are these *mysteries*? or why do you *conceal* your opinion, as if it were something disgraceful?" Academic: "That those who hear, will be swayed by reason, rather than authority." (*Lucullus* 60).[64]

[59] LS first wrote "314c–e" but later replaced it by "332d".—On the *Seventh Letter*, cf. ONI 348–51 with LS to Karl Löwith, August 15, 1946, in *GS–3* 663.

[60] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c3–5. Cf. *PAW* 35n17 and FP 375n44.

[61] See *CM* 61: "Socrates left us no example of weeping, but, on the other side, he left us example of laughing. The relation of weeping and laughing is similar to that of tragedy and comedy. We may therefore say that the Socratic conversation and hence the Platonic dialogue is slightly more akin to comedy than to tragedy." Cf. *OPS* 279. Contrast LS to Alexandre Kojève, April 22, 1957, in *OT* 275: "All the Dialogues are tragicomedies. (The tragedian is awake while the comedian is sleeping at the end of the *Symp*.)"

[62] Plato, *Republic*, 393c. Cf. *OT* 32.

[63] LS first wrote "never speaks" but later replaced it by "does *not*."

[64] Cf. Cicero, *Academica*, 2.59f.: "Mihi porro non tam certum est esse aliquid quod comprendi possit (de quo iam nimium etiam diu disputo) quam sapientem nihil opinari, id est numquam adsentiri rei vel falsae vel incognitae. Restat illud quod dicunt veri inveniundi causa contra omnia dici oportere et pro omnibus. Volo igitur videre quid invenerint. 'Non solemus,' inquit, 'ostendere.' 'Quae sunt tandem ista mysteria, aut cur celatis quasi turpe aliquid sententiam vestram?' 'Ut qui audient,' inquit, 'ratione potius quam auctoritate ducantur.'" ("For my part, moreover, certain as I am that something exists that can be grasped (the point I have been arguing even too long already), I am still more certain that the wise man

It is *Cicero* who relates this little dialogue. Cicero himself was an academic. *Consequently*, he says of himself: "we have preferably followed that kind of philosophy (sc. dialogic philosophy) which, as we believed, Socrates has used, (and we did this) in *order to hide our own opinion*, to free others from error, and to investigate in each discussion what is *most likely to be true*." (Tusc. V 11).[65] There is a connection between *hiding* and arriving at a result which is only *likely* to be true, which is only a *likely tale*:[66] the *true* tale is hidden; it is revealed perhaps in a *dream* (*Somnium Scipionis*).[67]

[5 recto] Hiding one's thought is irreconcilable with a perfectly clear and lucid *plan*. A lucid plan does not leave room for hiding-places—as a consequence, an exoteric book will not have a very lucid plan.[68]

Cf. Lessing, Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen: "Ich will mich so kurz fassen wie nur möglich und meine Gedanken wenn nicht ordnen so doch zählen."[69]

Cf. the twofold discussion of poetry in Rep.[70]—
ib.: the interruption after the enumeration of the bad constitutions—

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never holds an opinion, that is, never assents to a thing that is either false or unknown. There remains their statement that for the discovery of the truth it is necessary to argue against all things and for all things. Well then, I should like to see what they have discovered. 'Oh,' he says, 'it is not our practice to give an exposition.' 'What pray are these holy secrets of yours, or why does your school conceal its doctrine like something disgraceful?' 'In order,' says he, 'that our hearers may be guided by reason rather than by authority.'" Cicero, *De Natura Deorum. Academica*, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 543.)

[65] Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 5.4.10–11: "Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e caelo et in urbibus collocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coëgit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere: cuius multiplex ratio disputandi rerumque varietas et ingenii magnitudo, Platonis memoria et litteris consecrata, plura genera effecit dissentientium philosophorum, *e quibus nos id potissimum consecuti sumus, quo Socratem usum arbitrabamur, ut nostram ipsi sententiam tegeremus, errore alios levaremus et in omni disputatione quid esset simillimum veri quaereremus*." (My italics, H.K.) ("Socrates on the other hand was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil: and his many-sided method of discussion and the varied nature of its subjects and the greatness of his genius, which has been immortalized in Plato's literary masterpieces, have produced many warring philosophic sects of which I have chosen particularly to follow that one which I think agreeable to the practice of Socrates, in trying to conceal my own private opinion, to relieve others from deception and in every discussion to look for the most probable solution." Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, translated by J. E. King (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 435). Cf., for example, *NRH* 154–55.

[66] Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 29d. See, for example, *PAW*, 35 and *SPPP*, 166.

[67] Cf. Cicero, *De re publica*, 6.9ff.

[68] Cf. SSTX 523–24.

[69] Lessing, *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen* (*Werke*, vol. 7, 481): "Ich will, was ich zu sagen habe, so kurz zu fassen suchen, als möglich; und meine Gedanken wo nicht ordnen, doch zählen." ("I want to try to express what I have to say as briefly as possible; and where I won't put my thoughts in order, I'll at least number them.") Cf. LS to Hans-Georg Gadamer, February 26, 1961, in: "Correspondence concerning *Wahrheit und Methode*," *The Independent Journal of Philosophy/Unabhängige Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2 (1978): 6.

[70] *CM* 133: "Socrates suddenly returns to the subject of poetry, a subject which had already been discussed at great length when the education of the warriors was being considered. We must try to understand this apparently unmotivated return." Cf. *CM* 134–37.

the twofold discussion of education in *Laws*.[71] *Repetition*.[72]

the insertion of theology into penal law in the *Laws*[73] and into the discussion of noble lies in the Rep.[74]

the plan of Xen. *Memor.*[75]

Moreover, hiding one's thought is not reconcilable with absolutely lucid *expressions*: if everything is absolutely clearly expressed, there is no room for hiding places *within* the sentences.

A man who hides his thought will then accept the following maxim: "What is written beautifully and in order, is *not* written beautifully and in order." (Xen. Cyn[egeticus]. 13, 6).[76] This maxim occurs in a treatise on hunting with dogs, which is a rather good hiding place.

Hiding one's thoughts about the crucial things, when speaking or writing about those things, means making *misstatements* about those things—or: to *lie* about those things.

[71] Cf., for example, *AAPL* 23, 27 and 104–5.

[72] Cf. *OPS* 237: "General rule: there is never a repetition in Plato which is an identical repetition; there is always a change, though sometimes seemingly trivial." See *PAW* 16 and 62–64.

[73] According to LS's interpretation, books 9–12 of the *Laws* are "chiefly devoted to the penal law" (*AAPL* 64, cf. 126). With regard to the Athenian's natural religion in book 10, LS writes: "The Athenian is thus compelled or enabled to discuss what Adeimantos calls theology (*Republic* 379a5–6) within the context of the penal law, whereas Socrates discussed it within the context of pre-philosophic, nay, the most rudimentary education." (*AAPL* 140) Cf., for example, LS to Jacob Klein, February 16, 1939, in *GS–3* 567 as well as "Plato," in *History of Political Philosophy* (third edition), 85–86.

[74] Cf. *CM* 98, 102–03.

[75] LS's interpretation of the *Memorabilia* can be found in *XS* 1–126.

[76] Cf. *PAW* 29, SSTX 502, and LS to Jacob Klein, August 7, 1939, in *GS–3* 575–76.